

REMARKS

In response to the Office Action mailed June 4, 2003, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration. To further the prosecution of this application, each of the objections and rejections made in the Office Action is addressed herein.

Claims 9-16, 18-39 and 41-55 presently are pending in this application, of which claims 9, 12, 28, and 31 are independent claims. By this Amendment, Applicants have cancelled claims 1-8, 17 and 40 without prejudice or disclaimer, and amended claims 9, 12, 18-24, 28 and 31-39. Claims 32-39 were withdrawn from consideration due to a previous restriction requirement, but Applicants have amended these claims herein so as to now depend from what is believed to be an allowable base claim (claim 9). Also, Applicants have added new dependent claims 41-55 to further define Applicants' contribution to the art. No new matter is added. The application as now presented is believed to be in allowable condition.

A. Allowable Subject Matter

On Page 4, the Office Action indicates that claims 12, 17-24 and 28-30 are objected to as being dependant upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form to include all of the limitations of their respective base claims and any intervening claims.

Accordingly, independent claim 9 has been rewritten to include the limitations of claim 17, and claim 17 has been cancelled. Additionally, claims 12 and 28 have been rewritten in independent form to include all of the limitations of independent apparatus claim 9 as pending prior to the amendments herein. Therefore, each of these claims as amended now is in condition for allowance. Several of the dependent claims have been amended to account for the foregoing amendments and cancellation of claim 17.

Claims 10, 11, 13-16, 18-27 and 32-39 depend from newly rewritten independent claim 9 and are allowable based at least upon their dependency.

New claims 41-55 depend from newly rewritten independent claim 12 and are allowable based at least upon their dependency.

Claims 29 and 30 depend from newly rewritten independent claim 28 and are allowable based at least upon their dependency.

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Independent method claim 31 has been amended to include the limitations formerly recited in cancelled claim 17. Hence, it is believed that this claims also is now in condition for allowance.

B. Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §102 and §103

Claims 1-8 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 as being obvious over Bailey et al (U.S. Patent No. 5,752,766). Claims 9-11, 13, 25-27 and 31 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Robbins (U.S. Patent No. 4,704,660). The claim amendments herein are believed to render these rejections moot. Applicants do not accede, however, to the propriety of these rejections, and have made the amendments herein solely to expedite the prosecution of this application towards allowance by accepting subject matter deemed allowable by the Examiner. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully reserve the right to file one or more applications relating to the subject matter of the claims prior to the amendments herein.

C. Drawings

On the Office Action cover sheet, the Examiner has indicated that corrected drawings for approved drawing corrections are required in reply to the Office Action. Applicants respectfully point out to the Examiner that formal drawings including these corrections already have been filed in this application on July 22, 2003. Accordingly, it is believed that corrected drawings are not required.

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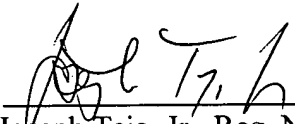
CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, this application should now be in condition for allowance. A notice to this effect is respectfully requested. If the Examiner believes, after this amendment, that the application is not in condition for allowance, the Examiner is requested to call the Applicant's attorney at the telephone number listed below.

If this response is not considered timely filed and if a request for an extension of time is otherwise absent, Applicant hereby requests any necessary extension of time. If there is a fee occasioned by this response, including an extension fee, that is not covered by an enclosed check, please charge any deficiency to Deposit Account No. 50/2762.

Respectfully submitted,

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